



B L E A C H E R S

Choppy Waters

Budget woes and gender equity have left men's sports at many schools in need of a life preserver.

During the summer of 1993, Brett Bhesania was all set to enroll at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) as a student athlete. The highly recruited swimmer had accepted a scholarship and was looking forward to top Division I intercollegiate competition.

His plans changed that July when UCLA dropped its men's swimming program and rescinded Bhesania's athletic scholarship. Moving quickly to go elsewhere, he called Syracuse University swimming coach Lou Walker, who had recruited him earlier in the year.

Situations like Bhesania's are becoming increasingly common as the fate of men's Division I nonrevenue varsity sports becomes increasingly tenuous nationwide. With decreases in athletic department budgets and increasing legal pressure to create gender equity in athletic participation, many men's programs have been eliminated.

During the 1983-84 school year, there were 136 Division I men's wrestling programs in the country. Ten years later, there were only 107. In the same 10-year span, 17 Division I men's gymnastics and 22 men's swimming and diving teams were dropped. With the exception of lacrosse and soccer, virtually all men's nonrevenue sports—those that generate little to no income—have decreased in number.

Syracuse hasn't eliminated a sport since 1978, when it dropped men's skiing. SU currently fields 11 men's teams and 9 women's teams, but the ratio of male to female participation is 70 to 30. There are plans under way to add an undisclosed number of new women's sports, which could begin competition as early as the 1995-96 school year.

"At the request of Chancellor Shaw, we have developed a long-range plan for implementing new sports for women," says Syracuse athletic director Jake Crouthamel. "That plan does not include a recommendation to eliminate men's sports in the immediate future." However, he warns, "there is not a bottomless pot of gold."

More and more, athletic departments are being asked to fund their programs independently from their institutions, forcing athletic directors to make hard choices about how many and which sports to sponsor.

"We're getting to the point in intercollegiate athletics where the revenue potential has just about reached its maximum potential, so athletic departments must look for cost-cutting measures in order to finance their programs," says Crouthamel.

Revenue generated from highly visible men's basketball and football teams helps support entire athletic programs at many Division I institutions, SU

STEVE PARKER



Tighter budgets and stricter legal interpretations of gender equity in athletic participation have caused nonrevenue men's sports, such as swimming and diving and gymnastics, to be eliminated at many institutions nationwide.

Yes, Walker said, we'd love for you to come to Syracuse. So the freshman from Fountain Valley, California, packed his bags and headed east to become an Orangeman.

"Although it was tough getting used to the cold weather, I've enjoyed Syracuse," says Bhesania. "These things happen for a reason and I think it was good I ended up at SU."

included. Unfortunately, the number of athletic scholarships allotted to football by the NCAA (85) also makes it difficult to create a balance between the number of men and women participating in athletics. No other sport compares in numbers of team members.

To compete at the top level of intercollegiate football and earn substantial income, programs such as Syracuse award the maximum allowance of scholarships. With the new legal interpretations of Title IX as strict gender equity, these numbers skew the male to female participation balance, which the NCAA says must parallel enrollment. SU's male to female enrollment is approximately equal.

"It becomes a Catch 22," says Crouthamel. "Without football, funds are low. With it, the school's gender participation levels are unequal. In tough financial times, the solution for many universities is to cut men's non-revenue sports."

According to Walker, Syracuse has an advantage in that it sponsors only 20 sports. Many schools forced to cut teams have been large public universities, such as UCLA and the University of Illinois, which have sponsored as many as 30 sports.

Walker feels confident about the future of men's swimming at SU, particularly with the welcome addition of swimmers such as Bhesania. He is quick to point out, however, that while he benefits in the short run, the national trend bodes poorly for intercollegiate athletics as a whole.

"If you're dropping programs, it's not good for anybody's case in the athletic realm," says Walker.

It's bad for both students and institutions, according to Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw. "Athletics provide a forum for institutional pride, binding both current students and alumni to the University," he says.

"Participation in sports offers a dimension to a university education that adds to the overall academic program for large numbers of students. As a group, athletes have a higher graduation rate than their nonathlete peers. Turning out successful graduates is, after all, what we want to do here."

—ANDREA C. MARSH

SPORTS SHORTS

➤ *Fighting Irish join the Big East.* On July 1, Big East Commissioner Mike Tranghese announced Notre Dame University would join the athletic conference in all sports except football, beginning with the 1995-96 season. "It's a spectacular opportunity for our program," says Notre Dame athletic director Dick Rosenthal. "The Big East is recognized as one of the premier conferences in the country."

➤ *Big Winners in the Big East.* Seven SU athletes posted individual Big East Conference Championship titles during the spring: **Kim Johnson of Fort Washington, Maryland**, won her second consecutive hammer throw and the shot-put title at the indoor track and field championships. She holds the SU record in the hammer throw;

Chris Aikens of Reading, Pennsylvania, won the triple jump at the indoor track and field championships and was named Most Outstanding Freshman by the Big East Coaches Association;

Lesia Francis of Boston won the outdoor track and field shot-put title;

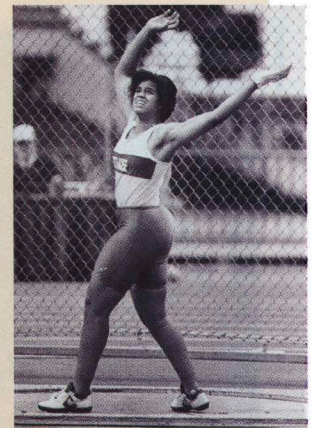
Devon Patton of Willingboro, New Jersey, won the outdoor track and field 400-meter championship and provisionally qualified for the June NCAA Championships held in Boise, Idaho;

Sebastien Goulet of Boucherville, Quebec, Canada, earned his 10th individual Big East swimming title, winning the 200 individual medley and 100 freestyle. With those victories, Goulet tied the SU and conference individual title records. He was also a member of two winning relay teams, and was named the Big East Scholar Athlete of the Year.

Seth Williams of Cortland, New York, was the 50-yard freestyle winner at the swimming and diving championships and was a member of two winning relay teams; and

Erica O'Neill of Colts Neck, New Jersey, won the Flight B singles title at the tennis conference championships and, with **Jana Strnadova**, won the Flight A doubles title.

In addition to these individual titles, 36 Syracuse University varsity athletes were named to the 1993-94 Academic All-Big-East team.



Kim Johnson

➤ *Strnadova earns All-America honors.* Sophomore Jana Strnadova, from Prague, Czech Republic, upset second-seeded Lucie Ludvigova of Texas in the first round of the NCAA Women's Tennis Singles Championships and defeated Notre Dame's Holyn Lord to advance to the top round of 16 and become the first SU women's tennis player to earn All-America honors.